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Plato's Tripartite Division of the soul and Evagrius' Spiritual Theology

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Abstract

Evagrius heavily borrowed from Plato's tripartite division of the soul to develop his own spiritual and psychological theology. Plato's theory of the soul is scattered into his various writings. In his *Republic*, he argues about the tripartite division of the soul, as he explains the three functions of the righteous state. *Timaeus*, which was dedicated to the origin and birth of the universe, treats it in the anatomical and physiological point of view. He also describes it in his *Phaidrus*, explaining the fall and the ascension of the soul through the analogy of a horseman and a chariot with two horses.

I also remarked how Evagrius Ponticus accepted and changed Plato's tripartite division of the soul. According to Evagrius, both the concupiscible part and the irascible faculty should be healed and purified, while Plato insists that the rational part should control the concupiscible part with the help of the irascible part. Secondly, Evagrius's theory differs from the platonic system in the fact that the irascible part needs more treatment than the concupiscible faculty. The conception of the treatment of the irascible part is almost absent in Plato's theory. Finally, Evagrius explains the notion of *theoria* (qewri/a) through a Christian adaptation of the Stoic *apatheia*, whereas the platonic concupiscible part is a starting point for the ascension of the soul accompanied by the role of remembrance and Eros.

Keywords

Evagrius, Tripartite division of the soul, Praktikos, Spirituality, Desert Fathers, Plato

I. Introduction

In this study, I will examine a platonic origin of the spiritual theology of Evagrius Ponticus. Evagrius of Pontus synthesized and systematized various philosophical and theological traditions on the basis of a severe spiritual discipline and self-denial in the Egyptian desert of the 4th century. Above all, his spiritual teaching is founded on the tripartite division of the soul of Plato, but such a dependance is not yet researched seriously as far as I know. Therefore, my study will consists of a research on the *status quo*, the platonic theory of the division of the soul and the Christian reception of Evagrius.

II. The *Status Quo* of the Tripartite Division of the Soul

The starting point of the spirituality of Evagrius Ponticus is his tripartite division of the soul.¹ According to the “philosopher of the desert,” the soul is divided into three components: the intellect (το λογιστικὸν or νοῦς) which is both a reasonable ability and *imago Dei*, the concupiscible faculty (το επιθυμητικὸν or επιθυμία) from where desires originate, and the irascible part (το θυμικὸν or θυμὸς) which is a place of anger. These three parts of the soul are mentioned all together only twice in

¹This study is supported by the Graduate School of Hanyoung Theological University.

Concerning Evagrian tripartite division of the soul, see S.-H. Nam, “A Spiritual Therapy of Evagrius of Pontus: The Tripartite Division of the Soul and its Treatment,” *The Journal of Classical Studies* 43 (2015.12), 39–77. Evagre le Pontique, *Traité Pratique ou le Moine, Spiritualité Orientale* 67, Introduction et commentaire par Gabriel Bunge, traduit du l’allemand par Paul Peterzell (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1996), 19–44.

the writings of Evagrius.² They can be also classified sometimes into two other parts: the rational part, and the irrational part (ἄλογον μέρος) or the passionate part (παθητικὸν μέρος); the former corresponds to the intellect or the reason in a narrow sense, the latter to the concupiscible and the irascible parts which come from flesh and the body.

Two French scholars, Antoine Guillaumont and Claire Guillaumont, who published some of the most fundamental studies on Evagrius, mentioned in the introduction of their *Praktikos* that the tripartite division of the soul of Plato is the fundamental anthropological structure of Evagrian spirituality. Nevertheless, this aspect was not accentuated clearly, and it remained inconspicuous. On the other side, they showed in detail in what chronological phases Evagrius had embraced the platonic theory concerning the division of the soul. Nevertheless, their studies are not interested in differences between Plato's theory and Evagrius's.

Gabriel Bunge, a Swiss germanic scholar, explained clearly in the introduction of his commentary of *Praktikos* that the spiritual theology of Evagrius is based on the tripartite division of the soul. He, who is undoubtedly one of the most distinguished scholars in Evagrian studies, approached in his various writings the spirituality of Evagrius and the theory of *logismoi* or eight generic thoughts in the light of the tripartite division of the soul.³ Nevertheless, I have not yet found any simple comparison between Plato and Evagrius in his studies. His scientific interests in Evagrius Ponticus are very comprehensive and they surely constitute an indispensable bibliography for this field; perhaps his reticence of the platonic influence on Evagrian theory of the soul originates from his preference in

² Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 89 (SC 171: 680-9). Evagrius, *Scholia on the Proverbs*, 11.17 (SC 340: 224-5).

³ Evagre le Pontique, *Traité Pratique ou le Moine, Spiritualité Orientale* 67, 28-30. Gabriel Bunge, *Dragon's Wine and Angel's Bread, The Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus on Anger and Meekness*, translated from the German by Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2009), 13-22. Gabriel Bunge, *Despondency The Spiritual Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus on Acedia*, translated from the German by Anthony P. Gythiel (Yonders: St Vladimir's Seminar Press, 2012), 51-64. cf. A. Casiday, "Gabriel Bunge and the Study of Evagrius Ponticus," Review Article, *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48.2 (2004), 249-97.

communicating the essence of the spiritual teaching of the philosopher of the desert to modern public readers rather than a historical and scientific concern itself. If it is not the case, it would be possible that he would have been indifferent to the matter.

In addition, I'd like to point out the fact that most of the modern studies on Evagrius care little for the platonic influence in his spirituality or anthropology. It would be vain to search for any mention on Evagrius' theory of the soul as well as its platonic influence in the index of the most comprehensive Sinkewicz' s publication among English translations of Evagrius' ascetic writings.⁴ It is the same case with the works of J. E. Bamberger, A. M. Casiday, and D. Brakke.⁵ It certainly seems that J. Driscoll considered Plato' s influence on Evagrius insignificant, since he was never reminded of it in his book, destined to be the spiritual progress of Evagrius, while he mentioned it briefly in his English translation of *Sententiae ad Monachos*.⁶ In the case of L. Dysinger, the tripartite division of the soul occurred more frequently in his study on psalmody and prayer of Evagrius Ponticus, but it concerned only about the irascible part (θυμῶς) of the platonic theory.⁷

I believe this kind of reticence influenced Evagrian studies in Korea. The tripartite division of the soul had little importance in the articles of J.-H. Kim and J.-K. Yoo.⁸ Generally speaking, Korean studies have never paid attention to this topic

⁴ Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, translated with Introduction and Commentary by R. E. Sinkewicz, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵ Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos, Chapters on Prayer*, translated with an introduction and notes by J. E. Bamberger (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981). Evagrius Ponticus, A. M. Casiday (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back, Antirrhethikos, A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, translated with an Introduction by David Brakke (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009). There is no reference to the tripartite division of the soul in these publications.

⁶ J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection, Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (New York: the Newman Press, 2005). Evagrius Ponticus, *Ad Monachos*, translation and Commentary by J. Driscoll, *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York: The Newman Press, 2003), 8-9.

⁷ Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31-33, 40, 118, 120, 124-30.

⁸ Joo-Han Kim, "Spiritual Theology of Evagrius Ponticus : An Analysis of The Praktikos,"

except the only one case in which S.-S. Huh remarked briefly Plato's influence in his short commentary of the chapter 89 of *Praktikos*.⁹

I am sure that if someone wants to understand correctly the essence of the spirituality of Evagrius Ponticus, it is necessary to approach his Christian adaptation of the tripartite division of the soul of Plato. According to Evagrius, the intellect or the reason, center of the soul, is disturbed by the unpurified desires and anger. Eight *logismoi* or eight generic thoughts that are provoked by troubled desires and anger only supplementary in his system. Vincent Desprez tried to reconstruct the spiritual theology of Evagrius primarily on the foundation of the theory of eight *logismoi* without referring to the tripartite division of the soul in his study on early monasticism.¹⁰ As stated above, J. Driscoll made a similar blank to that of Vincent Desprez. He paid attention only to the "eight evil thoughts" and the notion of *apatheia* without turning his eyes to the triple structure of the soul, introducing almost all ascetic writings of Evagrius.¹¹ Andrew Louth in his turn is not far from this kind of methodological deficiency; he did not even mention the tripartite division of the soul, focusing on the notion of *logismoi* and *apatheia* when he was summarizing the spiritual progress of Evagrius.¹²

The "Seven Deadly Sins" are a medieval aureole derived from the eight *logismoi*. The notion of seven deadly sins prevailed in the medieval literature and arts, and it also contributed to form the spirituality of western civilization even after

Theological Studies 44 (2003.12), 241-258. Jae-Kyoung Yoo, "The Spiritual Understanding of Human Beings According to Evagrius of Pontus," *Korean Journal of Christian Studies* (2012.1), 327-352. Jae-Kyoung Yoo, "The Comparative Analysis of the Prayer of Evagrius Ponticus and Heiler from the Viewpoint of Contemplative Prayer," *Theological forum* 71 (2013.3), 203-237.

⁹ Evagrius, *Praktikos*. Korean Translation by S.-S. Huh (Wheigwan: Bundo, 2011), note 109.

¹⁰ Vincent Desprez, *Le Monachisme Primitif, Des origines jusqu'au concile d'Ephèse*, *Spiritualité Orientale* 72 (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1998), 369-99.

¹¹ Jeremy Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection, Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (New York: The Newman Press, 2005), 11-93.

¹² Andrew Louth, *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition, From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 100-113.

the Reformation.¹³ I suppose, therefore, that modern studies are inclined to substitute eight *logismoi* for the core of the spirituality of Evagrius. Nevertheless, the essence of the spirituality of Evagrius is condensed in the tripartite division of the soul, and the categories of *logismoi* may be various depending on the culture and the era.

III. Plato' s Tripartite Division of the Soul

We find the notion of the tripartite division of the soul in several works of Plato such as *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*.¹⁴ Its understanding is indispensable to approach the spiritual essence of Evagrius. First of all, Plato develops his theory in *Republic* on the viewpoint that a man is just in the same way as a state is just. In his *Timaeus*, he explains three characteristics of the soul from an anatomical and physiological perspective. He clarifies in *Phaedrus* the ascension of the soul through a parable of a carriage and pair and a horseman which symbolizes the three faculties of the soul. Some pages of Plato' s *Symposium* should also be taken into consideration because Plato had clearly explained how to purify and sublimate the concupiscible part.

Plato argues, in a very detailed manner, the tripartite division of the soul in his *Republic* IV. He there develops his theory based on the point of view that a just

¹³ Concerning Seven Deadly Sins, see Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins. An introduction to the history of a religious concept with a special reference of Medieval English literature* (Michigan: Michigan State College Press, 1952), 69-104. Richard G. Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard (ed.), *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture, The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins* (Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2012).

¹⁴ For the introduction of the tripartite division of the soul, see Young-Sik Park, "Plato's Theory of the Soul," *The Journal of the Humanities* 12 (1964.10), 71-73. Mee-Cheong Yoon, Kyung-Sook Hwang, "A study on the body and the soul in Plato's philosophy," *Philosophy of Movement : Journal of Korean Philosophic Society for Sport and Dance* 19 (2011), 182-83.

man will be no different from a just state. The state consists of three kinds of classes: the moneymaking class or the artisan class (ξρηματιστικῶν γένος), the auxiliary class (ἐπικουρικῶν γένος), and the guardian class (φυλακικῶν γένος) or the deliberative class (βουλευτικῶν γένος).¹⁵ The moneymaking class consists of those who engage in the handwork and who are in charge of economical activities of the state. The auxiliary is the military class that maintains the public order and defends the state against its external enemies. The deliberative and guardian (βουλευτικὸς καὶ φύλαχ) are the rulers (ἄρξωντες) who legislate and govern the state by the law and are responsible for lawsuits.¹⁶ If any of these three classes encroach into another's function, there will be "injustice, licentiousness, cowardice, ignorance, in other words, extreme evil fatal to the state."¹⁷

A just state is fully realized when these three groups fulfil their job and are temperate, courageous and wise according to their own natural properties and conditions.¹⁸ Temperance is a kind of control over pleasures and passions. At the state level, temperance is a virtue necessary for both the rulers and their subjects, and it is also an order or a virtue like a harmony that can be realized only when desires of vulgar persons are controlled by desires and wisdom of righteous people.¹⁹ Courage is indeed to keep a right and lawful belief about what is danger and what is not, and it is a virtue that can be established when the auxiliaries, so to speak the soldiers, are obedient to the rulers and the governors, just as a shepherd commands his dog to kneel down.²⁰ Prudence (φρόνησις) or wisdom (σοφία) is a virtue

¹⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 434c and 440e-441a. 'The deliberative' can be also the legislative. Plato, *The Republic*, with an English Translation by Paul Shorey, Books I-V, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London: Harvard University Press, 1937), 370-71 and 404-405.

¹⁶ Ibid., 434b, 433c, 433e.

¹⁷ Ibid., 433c-d, 434b, 444b.

¹⁸ Ibid., 435b.

¹⁹ Ibid., 430e-431e.

²⁰ Ibid., 430b, 440d.

indispensable to the rulers.²¹

Plato argues that there are the same three classes in the human soul (ψυχή/) as in the state.²² How can be it so? It can be proved by various opinions of people from different nationalities. For example, the Greeks belong to the class of “love of the learning” (το φιλομαθές), while “passion” (το θυμοειδές) originated in the peoples of Thrace and Scythia, and “love of money” (το φιλοζήματον) belongs to the Phoenicians and the Egyptians.²³ Such estimations result from individuals who are the origin of it, and these three classes of people reveal that the human soul is separated into three parts. And a person uses one part of the soul to learn (μανθάνομεν), another one when he becomes angry (θυμούμεθα), a third one when he desires (ἐπιθυμοῦμεν) the pleasure of food and sex and all things akin to these.²⁴

On the other hand, Plato proceeds to elaborate more on the tripartite division of the soul through fundamental desires of the human body and the control of these desires. For instance, a desire (ἐπιθυμία) of thirst or hunger seeks always for a drink or food.²⁵ This appetitive part (το ἐπιθυμητικόν) can be called the irrational (το ἀλόγιστον), because it drives the soul to the desires such as love, hunger and thirst like animals do.²⁶ Nevertheless, there is also the thought (λογισμός) which hinders and controls desires, and it can be called the rational (το λογιστικόν). Other than the appetitive and the rational, there is a third faculty, that of the passion (το τοῦ θυμοῦ) or the passionate (το θυμοειδές).²⁷ This composition is made due to the fact that anger

²¹ Ibid., 433c-430d.

²² Ibid., 435e, 441c.

²³ Ibid., 435e-436a.

²⁴ Ibid., 436a-b.

²⁵ Ibid., 437d-e & 439a-b.

²⁶ Ibid., 439d & 439b.

²⁷ Ibid., 439e and 440e. The conception of the passionate of Plato's theory is different from that of anger of Aristotle. Kang, Sung-Hoon. “Anger and the Spirited Part of the Soul in Plato,” *Cheolhaksasang* 47(2013.2), 33-65.

(οργή) differs from desires (ἐπιθυμίαι) and both sometimes battle each other.²⁸ For instance, when someone believes he or she has been deceived, this person will rage and ally his spirit with what he believes to be right, overcoming hunger, cold, and all such things until it calms down and is pacified by reason (λόγος).

Then what is it to have the three parts of the soul, that is, the appetitive, the rational and the passionate, to be in a good relation? A person can be just when the passionate is subject to the rational and an ally of it, and when in turn, the rational takes control of the appetitive with the passionate.²⁹ The rational must govern, even though it is the smallest part (το μικρον μέρος), and be nurtured with fine literature and learning. The passionate should be obedient to the rational and cooperate, being relaxed, encouraged and civilized with harmony and rhythm. The appetitive side which is the largest part (πλείστον) of the soul is naturally most greedy for material things and is filled with physical pleasures. And it attempts to enslave and rule the rational and the passionate. Therefore, the rational should be rightly nurtured and learned with the passionate, and must watch and rule the passionate.

According to Plato, “a man is just in the same way as a state is just.”³⁰ In other words, a state becomes just when the auxiliaries keep a right belief about what is danger and what is not, and when they obey to the rulers and legislators, just as the image of a dog obeying to its master. Likewise, a person becomes just when his passionate part keeps firmly, face to pain and pleasure, what he has been taught he must fear and not by the order of reason.³¹ And as a state is temperate when desires of vulgar persons are controlled by desires and prudence of righteous people, a person becomes temperate when his desire and anger are ruled by the rationality of his soul. Finally, a person becomes wise when the rational part knows what is necessary to every category of the soul and rules all of it. Consequently, justice takes place when the three components of the soul rule each other according to their nature. But if desire and passion do not subordinate to the ruling part, the soul

²⁸ Ibid., 440a-d.

²⁹ Ibid., 441c-442b.

³⁰ Ibid., 435b.

³¹ Ibid., 441c-d & 442b-d.

would undergo through confusion and insurrection among other parts of the soul such as injustice, ignorance, sickness, and evil.³²

In *Timaeus* of which the main themes consist of the creation of the universe and human being, Plato explains three parts of the soul from an anatomical and physiological perspective. According to it, the *demiourgos* created the heavenly bodies of the universe, also divided the human soul into a immortal principle (αρχὴ ἀθάνατος) and a mortal body (το θνητὸν).³³ The immortal part of the soul is both the best (το βέλτιστον) and the divine part (το θεῖον), figuratively like the citadel of a state.³⁴ The mortal part of the soul consists of two chambers: one that desires victory (το φιλονικον) and the other appetitive (το ἐπιθυμητικόν).³⁵ The chamber of the soul which loves another in which victory is the passionate part (το τοῦ θυμοῦ or το θυμοειδές) as Plato explains in his *Republic*. The heavenly bodies blended the two mortal parts of the soul with the irrational sensation and the all-daring lust (ἔρως).³⁶

Plato connects the three parts of the soul with various parts of the physical body and anatomically explains their relations. The soul's lasting and perishable parts are separated by the narrow passage of the neck. The immortal parts called to be the rational part that contains the divine seed (το θεῖον σπέρμα) located in the brain.³⁷ The mortal parts of the soul, the passionate and the appetitive, are found under the neck. The passionate, which is related with courage and spirit (ἀνδρεία καὶ θυμός), is planted in the chest between the neck and the midriff. The appetitive is placed between the midriff and the boundary of the navel and fulfills the job of satisfying human nature just as a hungry beast longing near a manger to devour

³² Ibid., 443b, 444b ὦ d-e.

³³ Plato, *Timaeus*, 69b-c. Plato, *Timaeus*, with an English Translation by R. G. Bury, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London: Harvard University Press, 1929), 178-79. Platon, *Timée, Critias*. tome X. Texte établi et traduit par A. Rivaud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), 195.

³⁴ Ibid., 69d ὦ 70a-b.

³⁵ Ibid., 70a ὦ 70d.

³⁶ Ibid., 69d.

³⁷ Ibid., 73c-d.

anything it sees.³⁸

Why did the gods, in other words the heavenly bodies divided the passionate from the appetitive? They placed the passionate in the chest, near the head, a vessel formed for the supreme rational part, in order to subdue forcibly (βια), with the aid of reason, the waves of desires (το τῶν επιθυμιῶν γένος).³⁹ The center of the passionate is the heart, as the heart is the junction of veins and the source of blood. The lungs make the heart to become cool and suffer less when the heat of the passion “boils up.”⁴⁰ On the other hand, the appetitive is implanted as far away as possible from the counselling part (so that the former creates the least possible turmoil) therefore allowing the counsel to reason in a peaceful manner.⁴¹

In *Phaedrus*, the tripartite division of the soul is dedicated to elucidate how the soul participates in the world of Ideas through the eros (ἔρως).⁴² The greatest blessings come to humanity through madness (μανία), which is sent as a divine gift (θεῖς δόσει) from the gods.⁴³ The first kind of divine madness is the one that possessed Phytia, the prophetess at Delphi, and the prophetesses at Dodona. The second kind is a prophetic madness which heals diseases and the greatest troubles resulted from some ancestor’s guilt. The third madness which comes from the Muses (Μοῦσαι) and captures the soul in passion for poetic inspirations. The last one leads a person to solely think about the true beauty of Ideas and to lose interest on all earthly things. Such person is rebuked and considered to have gone mad by most people, since he separates himself from human interests and turns his attention towards the divine.

Plato regards the last among the four madnesses (εὐθουσιᾶσεις) as the best

³⁸ Ibid., 70d-e.

³⁹ Ibid., 70a.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 70b-d.

⁴¹ Ibid., 70d-71a.

⁴² Eros must be interpreted “love” (ἔρως) or “divine being” (Ἐρως) according to the context. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 252d and 257a. Plato, *Phaedrus*, with an English Translation by H. N. Fowler, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London: Harvard University Press, 1914), 490 and 504.

⁴³ Ibid., 244a-245b.

possession, and explains, through a parable of a carriage and a horseman the ascension of the soul captured by such madness.⁴⁴ The soul is divided into three parts just as the image of the combination of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer.⁴⁵ A perfect immortal soul is fully winged and traverses the whole of heaven to participate in the godly world, while the soul filled with forgetfulness (λήθη) and evil (κακία) grows heavy, losing its feathers, falling to the earth and taking on itself an earthly body, which is designated as mortal (θνητός).⁴⁶ In fact, one of the horses is noble and the other ugly. The noble one, a friend of honour joined with temperance and modesty, is guided only by words of command and by reason. This horse symbolizes the passionate of the soul. Nevertheless, the bad horse, which represents the appetitive of the soul, weighs much heavier and is a friend of insolence, hardly obedient, and therefore must be whipped.⁴⁷ How can the fallen soul ascend to the heavens?

The ascension of the soul, so to speak, moving upwards depends on the function of their wings.⁴⁸ For the two horses to ascend, their wings need feathers to be sprouted. Feathers can only be sprouted when the soul remembers (ἀνάμνησις) and yearns the world of Ideas. But the physical eyes cannot see justice (δικαιοσύνη), temperance (σωφροσύνη), or wisdom (φρόνησις) itself, because their appearance (εἶδωλον) is not visible in the physical world.⁴⁹ Instead, the earthly beauty permits the feathers to grow in the wings, owing to remembrance.⁵⁰ For example, when one sees a godly face or form which is a good image of beauty (κάλλος), the effluence (ἀπορροή) of beauty enters him through the eyes. Then, from the beauty of this world, he would remember beauty itself of that other world (εκεῖσε) and such yearning of beauty helps

⁴⁴ Ibid., 249e.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 253c-d, 246a & d.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 246c & 248c.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 246a-d, 247b, 253c-d.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 246d.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 250b and d.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 251b. Concerning the conception of remembrance (anamnēsis) of Plato, see Dae-Ho Cho, "The Memory and the Soul in Plato's Philosophy," *Pan-Korean Philosophy* 66(2012), 52-86.

the feathers to sprout.⁵¹ Thus, Plato attributes importance to the function of sight and beauty itself in the process of the ascension of the soul.

The horse with temperance and modesty (αἰδῶς) is obedient to the charioteer and abstains from approaching a beloved sexually. The other one does not heed the pricks or the whip of the charioteer and causes troubles to his mate and to the charioteer, forcing them to approach the beloved and propose the joys of Aphrodite, that is to say, sexual pleasure.⁵² The good horse and the charioteer are indignant at the unruly horse, and the charioteer pulls the bit of the latter more violently, covering his scurrilous tongue and jaws with blood. When the obedient horse and the charioteer lead to the love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία), the licentious one, which causes evil in the soul, is held in subjection, and freedom is given to the good one, which produces virtue. And when this happiness of life is ended with the death of the body, two horses become light and winged. Thus, the love of wisdom (philosophy) plays a more important role than the human wisdom (σωφροσύνη ἀνθρωπίνη) or divine inspiration (θεῖα μανία) in the ascension of the soul.⁵³

In *Symposium*, on the one hand, Plato explains the origin of eros (ἔρως Ἔρως), both a longing of the soul and a divine being, and on the other hand, how eros ascends to beauty itself or wisdom itself, being free from physical or sensual obsession. Plato's *Symposium* is not related directly to the tripartite division of the soul but it matters in the way it gives some important elements to understand the theological anthropology of Evagrius. First of all, Eros (Ἐρως - Love) is a divine being (θεός) whose job is to fuse the two parts of the human soul separated by the gods because of sin.⁵⁴ Secondly, eros (ἔρως - love) is also a state of the soul. It is a

⁵¹ Ibid., 251a-b. The word "effluence" is an epistemological conception of Empedocles. Plato makes use of its similar word "particles" (μᾶρη) (Ibid., 251c). That other world (ἐκείσε) designates the world of Ideas. Platon, *Phédre*, notice de L. Robin, p. 43, n. 3.

⁵² Ibid., 254a-e.

⁵³ Ibid., 256a-b.

⁵⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, 192e, 193c-d. Plato, *Symposium*, with an English Translation by W.R.M. Lamb, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London: Harvard University Press, 1925), 144-147. cf. Young-Ran, Chang, "The Concept of History of Soul in Pre-Socratic Philosophy and Platon," *Studies in Philosophy East-West* 45 (2007), 151.

craving (ἐπιθυμία), a pursuit (διώχης), and a love of beauty (κἀλλους ἐρως) that all seek for being one with its splitted and lost half.⁵⁵

The one who loves beauty is the one who desires to recover his own original whole entity. The beauty of the soul, so to speak a beautiful thing in nature, is more precious than the beauty of the body. When the soul passes from view to view of beautiful things under the guidance of Eros, the latter reveals a wondrous vision, beautiful in its nature (τι θαυμαστον την φύσιν καλόν).⁵⁶ The soul ascends “through the just love of a boy” (δια το ορθῶς παιδεραστεῖν) and begins to descry the beauty itself (ἐκεῖνο το καλόν); beginning from all beautiful bodies (πάντα τα καλα σώματα), the soul proceeds to beautiful observances (τα καλα επιτηδεύματα), and from observances to beautiful learning (τα καλα μάθημα) so that in the end it comes to know the very essence of beauty (καλόν).⁵⁷ Thus, the role of Eros (Ἔρως) is to lead the soul from the beauty of this world to the beauty itself through eros (ἐρως), love of the beauty, which is our human nature (ἀνθρωπεία φύσις). Therefore, when the soul gives birth to virtue (ἀρετή) and rears it up, it can win the friendship of God (θεοφιλῆς) and to become immortal (ἀθάνατος).⁵⁸

IV. The Evagrian Reception and Changes

Evagrius divided the soul into three parts: the rational (το λογιστικόν or νοῦς), the concupiscible (το ἐπιθυμητικόν or ἐπιθυμία) and the irascible (το θυμικόν or θυμός). The concupiscible and the irascible can be called also the irrational. His division is borrowed from Plato's: the rational (το λογιστικόν), the passionate (το θυμοειδές or το τοῦ

⁵⁵ Ibid., 192e and 201a.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 210e.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 211b-c.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 212a-b.

θυμοῦ or το φιλόνηκον), and the appetitive (το επιθυμητικόν). This is the reason why the fundamental structure of the spirituality of Evagrius is similar to Plato's theory on the ascension of the soul. According to the anthropology of Evagrius, the intellect of the soul is capable of reaching the divine contemplation (θεωρία), but only once after its desires and anger are purified by the grace of Christ.⁵⁹ In the platonic system, the rational should control the appetitive with the help of the passionate and virtues, so that the soul, ascending to the beauty itself, may become a friend of God and immortal.

Plato's idea of a just life is based on reason seeking wisdom and commanding the passionate to work together with the rational in order to control the appetitive. Therefore, a person becomes righteous only when the three parts of the soul, the reason, the passionate and the appetitive, have individually acquired wisdom, courage, and temperance. Evagrius, baptizing the platonic tripartite division of the soul into a Christian conception, explains to become sons of God as below: "when you unify the bond of this trinity of yours by means of peace, then, unified by the commandment of the divine Trinity, you will hear: 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God' (Matt 5:9)." ⁶⁰ "The bond of this trinity of yours" is that of the soul, the spirit and the body, which individually corresponds in the context to the three components of the soul: the rational, the irascible and the concupiscible. And "the one whose intellect," says Evagrius, "is with the Lord all the time, and whose irascible part is full of humility thanks to its remembering God, and whose concupiscible (appetitive) part is entirely oriented toward the Lord, it is for such a person not to fear his or her enemies, those which circulate outside our mortal bodies." ⁶¹ Thus, as the platonic philosophy suggests

⁵⁹ The theory of the spirituality of Evagrius is different from the communal ideal of St Basil of Ceasarea or Benedict. cf. Hae-Yong You, "The Rule of Benedict as a Way of Spritual Journey," *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 45 (2013.12), 281-306.

⁶⁰ Evagrius, *To Eulogios*, 5-6, in Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, 33.

⁶¹ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, 4.73. 237. Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by Ilaria L. E. Lamelli, Society of Biblical Literature n. 38 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 237. Evagre le Pontique, *Les Six Centuries des 'Kephalaia Gnostika' d'Evagre le Pontique*, édition critique et traduction française par Antoine Guillaumont, *Patrologia Orientalis* tome 28-1 (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1959), 168-169.

that the soul needs to seek wisdom, courage, and temperance, Evagrius replaces these needs with the relationship with Christ. The fourth century Christian philosopher of the desert expressed this contemplative life in the chapter 86 of his *Praktikos*: “The rational soul acts according to nature when its concupiscible part longs for virtue, and the irascible part struggles on its behalf, and the rational part perceives the contemplation of beings.” ⁶²

Nevertheless, we have to pay attention to the changes made by Evagrius on the platonic theory of contemplation by means of the practical Christian spirituality of the Egyptian desert. At first, one of the major characteristics of Evagrius which differs from Plato is the method of purification of the soul. In the spiritual theology of Evagrius, the soul contemplates divine things only after its concupiscible and irascible parts are purified together, while in the platonic system the passionate part has to cooperate with the rational to control the appetitive. This aspect is the most distinguished element of the theological anthropology of Evagrius in comparison to the platonic tripartite division of the soul.

In his *Republic*, Plato explains that the passionate must be obedient to the reason and control the appetitive in accordance with the rational. We can find the same explanation in *Timaeus*: the rational and immortal faculty is in the head, the passionate, which is destined to follow the order of the reason, is located in the heart, and the appetitive is placed in the abdominal cavity so that it may have less influence on the reason and the courage. The parable of the horseman’s carriage and his two horses in *Phaedrus* presents the same structure. The good horse symbolizes the passion of the soul, the other bad horse designates the appetitive, and the horseman is a metaphor for reason. When the noble horse is obedient to the horseman so that the other may be tempered, the soul ascends to heaven to live with the gods.

Unlike the platonic ascension in which the passionate plays a positive role, Evagrius’ s theory suggests that the irascible part should be healed just as much as or even more than the concupiscible. This is the reason why we encounter this famous aphorisms from the philosopher of the desert: “the irascible requires more

⁶² Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 86.

remedies than the concupiscible.”⁶³ “The irascible faculty,” says Evagrius again, “when it is troubled, blinds the seer; the concupiscible/appetitive faculty, when bestially moved, hides the visible objects.”⁶⁴ Why is that? Evagrius thinks that anger is provoked when desires are not satisfied: “desire provokes anger for material.”⁶⁵ In other words, anger results from failed desires. Anger results from appetite, sexual desires, the love of money, and the desire of esteem, etc.⁶⁶ Anger also occurs as a result of thoughts of pride as far as it is concerned with failed desires.⁶⁷ Anger hinders prayers: “Anger renders the soul furious all day long, and especially during prayers it seizes the mind and represents to it the face of the one who has hurt it.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, Plato considers anger (οργή) as an enemy against desires (ἐπιθυμίαι) because he wants to endow the former with a power to control desires.⁶⁹ Surely, the passionate can be enslaved to the fleshly desires, but in the platonic theory such servility is not considered. In this respect, the spiritual theology of Evagrius is separated from the platonic conception.

Secondly, it is worth examining the difference between the irascible (το θυμικόν) of Evagrius and the platonic passionate part (το θυμοειδές). Whenever Plato speaks of the passionate, he repeats that the passionate must not be independent from the reason, but that it should obey to what the latter orders to be or not. The passionate has to be armed for the rational and be obedient to what it requires against pains and pleasures.⁷⁰ It is courage that obeys to what the reason orders, and

⁶³ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁴ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, 5.27.

⁶⁵ Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer*, 27, in Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, 195.

⁶⁶ The Monasticism flourished in the 4th century considers evangelical poverty according to Matt. 19:21 as primordial ideal. cf. Wonmo Suh, “Poverty Discourses in Edessa and its Environs from the End of 4th Century through the Fifth Century,” *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 44(2012.7), 199–227.

⁶⁷ Evagrius, *On Thoughts*, 23, in Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, 169.

⁶⁸ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 11.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 440a–d.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 441c–d and 42b–d.

this is the same in the soul and the state. In *Timaeus*, Plato gives an anatomical explanation that the heart, the center of the passionate is placed near the head so that the passionate may obey to the rational. He says that the good horse, so to speak the passionate, should be obedient to the horseman, the symbol of the reason, to ascend to the world of gods. In his works, Plato consistently attributes the passionate a supplementary role to the reason.

Nevertheless, the spirituality of Evagrius is totally different from the platonic theory when talking about the irascible being attacked by demons. According to Evagrius, “the demons drags us toward worldly desires and compel the irascible part, contrary to its nature, to fight with people, so that with the mind darkened and fallen from knowledge it may become the traitor of the virtues,” ⁷¹ and “indeed nothing else so inclines the mind to desertion like a disturbance in the irascible.” ⁷² “Pleasures provide the pretexts available to the irascible.” ⁷³ But when they are not satisfied, sadness and anger arise, and these thoughts (λογισμοί) prevent the soul from devoting itself to prayer. In the spirituality of Evagrius, sadness and anger, which are always concerned with unsatisfied pleasures, are like two sides of the same coin.⁷⁴ Taking advantage of anger, a consequence of frustrated pleasures, the demons drag them to fight with people. Such perspective of Evagrius is absent in Plato’s tripartite division of the soul.

But anger or sadness itself are not the purpose of the demons. The evil ones who compel the soul to fall in conflict with other people through the catalyst of anger, distract the soul from offering pure prayer. Anger troubles prayer by reminding the soul of the face of the person that it is mad at.⁷⁵ This is why Evagrius does not recognize the category of “just” anger. “There is absolutely no such thing as just anger against your neighbour. If you search, you will find that it is

⁷¹ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 24.

⁷² Ibid., 21.

⁷³ Ibid., 99.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 11.

possible even without anger for the matter to be settled properly.”⁷⁶ What should the monk do when a brother departs angry? In this case, it is necessary to extinguish the resentment by offering gifts or the hospitality of table.⁷⁷ How should he react when he is attacked by the thought of anger? Evagrius recommends to fight it. “Do not give you to the thought of anger, fighting in your intellect with the one who hurts you.”⁷⁸ “Do not pray before you have directed some words of anger against the one causing the affliction.”⁷⁹ For example, “We may pronounce some word against the demon.”⁸⁰ The monk should not only fight the demon of anger but also all sorts of demons, because “the nature of the irascible part is to fight against the demons and to struggle over any sort of pleasure, and the angels urge us to turn our irascibility against the demons.”⁸¹ Thus, hatred against the demons contributes greatly to our salvation.⁸²

According to Evagrius, the irascible part must fight against demons. On the other hand, Plato limits the passionate to control the appetitive. Furthermore, Plato proceeds to insist on a social application of the passionate. In other words, in the ideal state, the auxiliary class, properly making use of the passionate part, has to control the moneymaking or artisan class. Nevertheless, there is no social application of the irascible part for Evagrius. In his spiritual theory, Plato’s tripartite division of the soul is only adapted to the human soul, and such limitation is only stretched to the society and the state in *De Civitate Dei* XIX of Augustine of Hippo.

It is owing to Macarius the Egyptian, disciple of Antony the Great, that Evagrius could transform the passionate of Plato into a Christian conception.⁸³

⁷⁶ Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer*, 24.

⁷⁷ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁸¹ Ibid., 24 and 72.

⁸² Evagrius, *On Thoughts*, 10, in Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, 160.

⁸³ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 93.

Macarius taught Evagrius that when one harbours resentment for people he or she cannot offer pure prayer, but when one resents the demons he or she remains unharmed due to the use of the irascible part in nature. The Christian adaptation of the platonic passionate, which is systematized in the spirituality of Evagrius, results from the monastic reflection during some generations in the Egyptian desert during the fourth century.

Thirdly, it is interesting to compare the function of the concupiscible of Evagrius with the platonic appetitive and Eros. It is through the remembrance of the beauty and the role of Eros that Plato explains the ascension of the soul from the visible world to that of Ideas. In this process, the beauty of the visible world is neither neglected nor despised but plays a very essential role. According to *Phaedrus*, a beautiful face or body of this world remembers the beauty itself of the world of Ideas.⁸⁴ Plato argues in *Symposium* that the soul gazes at the beauty itself of the world of Ideas, proceeding from a beautiful body of a boy to beautiful observances and beautiful learning.⁸⁵ Thus, even the appetitive part in the platonic theory cooperates with other parts for the ascension of the soul with the help of the remembrance and the role of Eros. When the appetitive falls in sexual pleasures, the rational has to restrain it with the passionate from these pleasures and transform them into the love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία).⁸⁶

Nevertheless, we cannot find any conception of eros, neither any notions on the remembrance of external beauty of the invisible world in Evagrius' theories. The original function of the concupiscible in the spirituality of Evagrius is to wait for the Lord. "The concupiscible of 'the one who is always with the Lord' (Ps. 73.23) longs for the Lord."⁸⁷ The conception that the concupiscible part longs for the Lord means that it longs for virtue.⁸⁸ In fact, how can the concupiscible part wait for

⁸⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 251a-b.

⁸⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, 210e and 211b-c.

⁸⁶ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 254a-e and 256a-b.

⁸⁷ Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, 4.73 (see above note 62).

⁸⁸ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 86.

virtue without intermediary things? In the platonic theory, the beauty of the visible world is a kind of ladder which leads the soul to a love of the beauty of the invisible world.⁸⁹ Evagrius insists that the concupiscible part should seek for God, but he does not give any more detailed explanation about the way it should or can be done.

Instead of the platonic “intermediary ladder,” Evagrius was very influenced by the notion of a Stoic *apatheia* (impassibility). An example is when he mentions “those who have attained impassibility of the soul through this body” in the chapter 53 of his *Praktikos*. This does not mean to attain impassibility through the sensible beauty of this world. On the contrary, it should be understood upon his citation of 1 Cor 9:27 in the chapter 37 of *Gnostikos*: “I beat my body and make it my slave.” In other words, the soul can attain impassibility and see God through a pure prayer when it can control the body and be free from the passions.⁹⁰ If the soul is free from the passions of the body triggered by desires, it is separated from sensible things and “possesses little or no awareness at all of the irrational part.”⁹¹ The body is an instrument for the *theoria* in this sense that the soul cannot attain it without being separated from the body, and one should thank the grace of the God for such a relation of the body and *theoria*.⁹² In brief, Evagrius christianizes the stoic notion that one who separates desires from the body is able to attain *apatheia*, while he leaves unexplained the axiom that the concupiscible longs for the Lord.⁹³ His Christian adaptation of a stoic conception of *apatheia* should be further examined

⁸⁹ Plotinus also makes use of the conception of the ladder of sensible beauty which helps the soul to ascend to the invisible world. Euree Song, “Eros for God in Plotinus’ Philosophical Mysticism,” *The Journal of Greco-Roman Studies* 51(2013.9), 71-106.

⁹⁰ Evagrius, *Praktikos*, 63-67.

⁹¹ Ibid., 66.

⁹² Ibid., 53. According to Evagrius, the Manichaean point of view that considers the body as evil or the origin of evil is an error, because the grace of *theoria* is fundamentally connected to the body. Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, 4.60.

⁹³ A stoic theory of “impression” is important in the spirituality of Evagrius. The theory of impression of St. Augustine is different from that of Evagrius. cf. Kyoung-Dong Yoo, “Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on Memory: The Spiritual Nature and Categorization of Memory,” *Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology* 47 (2015.12), 201-23.

later in a detailed manner.

V. Conclusion

I discussed the tripartite division of the soul of Plato and its Christian acceptance of Evagrius. First of all, Evagrius' s idea is different from Plato' s in the sense that both the concupiscible and the irascible have to be healed, while in Plato' s theory, the rational should temper the appetitive with the passionate. Secondly, Evagrius believes the irascible is what should be healed rather than the concupiscible, and this idea is in direct opposition to the platonic theory. Finally, the role of the appetitive is very peculiar to the platonic system in that it supports the soul to ascend in the world of Ideas with the help of remembrance (*anamnēsis*) and Eros. Nevertheless, Evagrius accepts the theory of *apatheia* of the stoicism into a Christian adaptation to explain *theoria*, a divine encounter.

The tripartite division of the soul of Plato- Evagrius provided a fundamental basis for human understanding of western civilization. This kind of division of the soul may be useful for the Korean Church to gain deeper and broader knowledge of humanity. The main characteristic of Evagrius' s spirituality, suggesting that the irascible should be healed more than the concupiscible, may lead us to reexamine in a new perspective the evil roots of Korean society, which is spoken as an expression of "Gab-Eul relation." Human alienation due to desires and anger always remains in developed societies where a highly mechanized civilization is planted and a social welfare is established. The Christian spirituality of Evagrius has a modern significance in that it gives a new perspective on the origin of human alienation from the relation with God beyond era and culture.

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